

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 NEA-14 IO-14 ISO-00 NIC-01 ACDA-19 OMB-01

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07

PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 SAJ-01 SAM-01

EB-11 SSC-01 SCI-06 DRC-01 /170 W
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P R 091414Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2399

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION BERLIN

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

CINCEUR VAIHINGEN

CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN

CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 07470

MILITARY ADDRESSEES FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, GW

SUBJECT: POLITICAL SITUATION IN BONN: CONFUSION AND
UNCERTAINTY

1. SUMMARY. THE PREVAILING MOOD IN BONN THESE DAYS IS ONE OF UNCERTAINTY IN THE MIDST OF THE POLITICAL TURMOIL WHICH HAS FOLLOWED BRANDT'S RESIGNATION. THE JOCKEYING FOR POWER WITHIN AND BETWEEN THE COALITION PARTIES, COMBINED WITH SPECULATION ABOUT SEX SCANDALS INVOLVING THE CHANCELLOR, IS PRODUCING AN ATMOSPHERE OF HECTIC ACTIVITY AND WIDESPREAD RUMOR-MONGERING. TOP POLITICIANS ARE STAYING OUT OF THE LIMELIGHT, AND THE SPD AND FDP LEADERSHIPS ARE TOTALLY PREOCCUPIED WITH SORTING OUT THEIR RESPECTIVE PROBLEMS. EVEN THE OPPOSITION IS KEEPING A FAIRLY LOW PROFILE, APPARENTLY UNCERTAIN AS TO WHAT THE CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP MAY MEAN FOR THE CDU/CSU'S OWN FUTURE. IT WILL BE SEVERAL MORE DAYS BEFORE THE DUST SETTLES AND A CLEARER PICTURE OF THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE EMERGES.
END SUMMARY.

2. THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN BONN THESE DAYS IS ONE OF TURMOIL AND MUCH CONFUSION. THE TWO COALITION PARTIES' LEADERSHIPS ARE MEETING PRACTICALLY CONSTANTLY, SEPARATELY AND TOGETHER, AND SMALL PARTY CAUCUSES ARE GOING ON PRACTICALLY NON-STOP. EACH PARTY IS TRYING TO SETTLE ITS OWN INTERNAL LEADERSHIP COMPOSITION AND BOTH ARE TRYING TO ESTABLISH THE FRAMEWORK AND MAKEUP OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT AND ITS PROGRAM. THERE IS THUS A CONTINUAL AND NATURAL JOCKEYING FOR POWER GOING ON WITHIN BOTH PARTIES AND BETWEEN THEM.

3. BONN WAS EVER KNOWN AS A POLITICAL RUMOR-MILL, BUT IT HAS GONE INTO EXTRA HIGH GEAR IN THE WAKE OF BRANDT'S RESIGNATION. MOST OF THE SPECULATION IS CURRENTLY
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FOCUSING ON THE POSSIBLE SEX SCANDAL ROLE IN THE CHANCELLOR'S POLITICAL DEMISE. BRANDT'S MAY 8 TV STATEMENT OF CLARIFICATION (SEPTTEL), CAREFULLY WORDED AS IT WAS, HAS DONE NOTHING TO STILL THE RUMORS. THERE IS ALSO THE NATURAL GUESSING-GAME GOING ON AS TO WHO WILL BE IN THE NEW SCHMIDT-GENSCHER GOVERNMENT. SOME OF THE GUESSING IS FAIRLY WILD AND SIMPLY ADDS TO THE CLIMATE OF CONFUSION AND UNCERTAINTY IN THE PUBLIC

EVEN IN THE PARTY RANKS.

4. TWO OF THE CABINET FIGURES HAVE DROPPED OUT OF THE PICTURE, BOTH SPD MEMBERS. THEY ARE LAURITZEN (TRANSPORT) AND EHMKE (RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY). THE FORMER WAS BOUND TO GO IN ANY EVENT: HE WAS LONG CONSIDERED ONE OF THE WEAKEST OF THE BRANDT CABINET MEMBERS AND KNEW HE WOULD NOT BE PERSONA GRATA IN ANY SCHMIDT GOVT. EHMKE'S ANNOUNCED WITHDRAWAL WAS PERHAPS MORE UNEXPECTED, ALTHOUGH IT BECAME CLEAR IN THE COURSE OF THE WEEK THAT MANY SENIOR SPD POLITICOS WERE OUT TO GET HIM AND TO EVEN OLD SCORES: EHMKE HAD FEW FRIENDS, AND SO EVEN HIS RENOWNED THICK-SKINNED POLITICAL APPROACH AND HARDHEADEDNESS WERE NOT ENOUGH TO SAVE HIM FROM THOSE DETERMINED TO SETTLE OLD ACCOUNTS. BESIDES, THERE WERE SOME IN THE TOP OF THE SPD (REPORTEDLY INCLUDING WEHNER) WHO THOUGHT THAT EHMKE SHOULD HAVE BEEN FIRED IN ANY EVENT BECAUSE OF HIS INCOMPETENT HANDLING OF GUILLAUME'S SECURITY CLEARANCE IN THE

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INFO OCT-01 NEA-14 IO-14 ISO-00 NIC-01 ACDA-19 OMB-01

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P R 091414Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2400

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 07470

CHANCELLERY IN 1969 AND 1970.

5. TOP POLITICIANS OF ALL MAJOR PARTIES ARE GENERALLY STAYING OUT OF THE LIMELIGHT, AND INDEED ARE MAKING THEMSELVES SCARCE. SCHMIDT IS HARDLY TO BE SEEN. BOTH GENSCHER AND EHMKE, WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY ACCEPTED AMBASSADOR HILLENBRAND'S DINNER INVITATION FOR MAY 10 IN HONOR OF RUSSELL TRAIN, HAVE CALLED TO CANCEL. THE FACT IS THAT ALL OF THE SENIOR PARTY PEOPLE ARE IN BONN BUT THEY ARE TOTALLY PREOCCUPIED WITH THE DOMESTIC SITUATION AND ARE PAYING ATTENTION TO LITTLE ELSE.

6. INTERESTINGLY, EVEN THE OPPOSITION IS HANDLING THE BRANDT RESIGNATION AND THE CONSEQUENT DOMESTIC TO-ING AND FRO-ING QUITE CAREFULLY, APART FROM THE SPRINGER PRESS, WHICH IS HAVING A FIELD DAY WITH THE WEEK'S DEVELOPMENTS. THE OPPOSITION IS AVOIDING ANY GLOATING OVER BRANDT'S FATE AND THE SPD'S TROUBLES. THERE SEEMS TO BE A FEELING IN THE CDU/CSU THAT ANY OVER-PLAYING OF THE SPD'S DIFFICULTIES COULD BACKFIRE AND CONCEIVABLY CREATE A WAVE OF SYMPATHY FOR BRANDT AND HIS PARTY THAT COULD HELP THE SPD IN THE UPCOMING LAND ELECTION IN LOWER SAXONY.

7. THE OPPOSITION APPEARS SOMEWHAT UNCERTAINT THIS POINT, THEREFORE, AS TO HOW TO DEAL WITH THE POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE SITUATION. ONE ALSO SENSES, IN TALKING TO SOME CDU CONTACTS, THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE BEEN HAPPIER HAD THE GUILLAUME AFFAIR NOT BROKEN AND HAD BRANDT NOT RESIGNED. THEY PREVIOUSLY HAD A FAIRLY WEAK SPD-FDP LEADERSHIP TO CONTEND WITH AND THIS AUGURED WELL FOR THE CDU'S CHANCES IN FORTHCOMING STATE AND LOCAL ELECTIONS AND EVEN IN THE FEDERAL ELECTIONS IN 1976. THE SCHMIDT-GENSCHER TEAM MAY WELL BE A MUCH MORE DIFFICULT PROPOSITION. THUS, THERE DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE MUCH JOY AMONG MORE REASONABLE OPPOSITION CIRCLES OVER BRANDT'S DEPARTURE FROM THE CHANCELLERY.

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8. THE SITUATION DESCRIBED ABOVE IS CREATING SOMETHING OF A POLITICAL VACUUM IN BONN WHICH WILL PROBABLY LAST FOR A FEW MORE DAYS, AT LEAST UNTIL THE DUST SETTLES AND THE VARIOUS BARGAINING EFFORTS WITHIN AND BETWEEN THE SPD AND FDP TAKE CLEARER SHAPE. THE DAY-TO-DAY BUSINESS OF THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUES, OF COURSE, WITH THE WELL-DISCIPLINED AND DILIGENT GERMAN BUREAUCRACY GRINDING ALONG AS BEFORE. BUT THERE IS NO REAL SENSE OF LEADERSHIP AS YET, NOR CAN THERE BE UNTIL THE COALITION SETTLES ON A CABINET AND A PROGRAM AND TAKES OFFICE. UNTIL THAT TIME, WHICH WE WOULD JUDGE TO REQUIRE ANOTHER THREE TO FIVE DAYS, THE TOP-LEVEL FRG DECISION-MAKING PROCESS WILL BE NON-EXISTENT. THE INTERIM CHANCELLOR, SCHEEL, IS CERTAINLY NOT ONE TO BE ASSERTIVE AT THIS POINT, NOR COULD ONE REASONABLY EXPECT HIM TO BE. HE IS THE LAMEST OF LAME DUCKS AT THE PRESENT JUNCTURE.
HILLENBRAND

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